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23 April 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Robert M. Gates
Executive Assistant

SUBJECT: Intelligence Medals

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Let's discuss

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25X1 1. I was struck at the awards ceremony on Monday by the one thing
25X1 all the individual recipients had in common: all were senior intelligence
25X1 officials and had had long careers in intelligence. The ceremony and
25X1 presentation of Community medals was notable for the absence of younger
25X1 people and non-supervisory personnel. I believe this generally applies
25X1 also to the awarding of the more prestigious CIA medals, especially the
25X1 Distinguished Intelligence Medal and the Intelligence Medal of Merit.*
25X1 The guiding principle for the awarding of these higher level medals
25X1 would seem to be that if you are a senior official nearing retirement
25X1 or just retiring, you are entitled. By the same token, analysts who
25X1 have written momentous studies likely to have significant impact on U.S.
25X1 policy, inventors and developers of significant technical programs or
25X1 approaches in the DDS&T, or those responsible for important innovations
25X1 or achievements in the DDO or DDA need not apply. To be specific, of
25X1 [] DIMs awarded during the period 1977-79, [] were given upon retirement;
25X1 only one was given to someone below grade GS-16. Of [] Intelligence
25X1 Medals of Merit awarded during the same period, [] were to retirees;
25X1 or just over 26%, were presented to individuals under grade GS-15. []

2. There are, of course, exceptions. Individuals such as Tony Mendez who have performed brave deeds are occasionally nominated for the higher level awards. But the statistics would suggest that for at least the two awards I have mentioned, as well as the Community awards, such cases are

*The DIM is awarded "for outstanding service or for achievement of a distinctly exceptional nature the results of which constitute a major contribution to the mission of the Agency." The IMM is awarded for "especially meritorious service or for an achievement conspicuously above normal duties, resulting in a significant contribution to the mission of the Agency."

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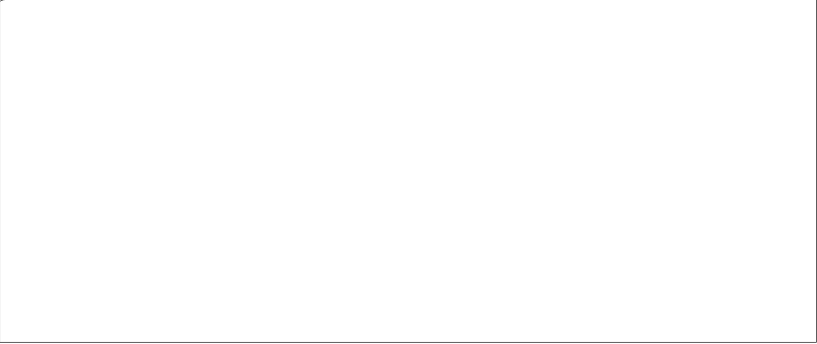

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indeed just exceptions. In fact, the only awards which are more commonly awarded for individuals in the middle-level grades are the Certificate of Distinction and the Certificate of Merit. Of [] Certificates of Distinction awarded between 1977 and 1979, [] were awarded to individuals in grades GS-14 and below; of [] Certificates of Merit awarded during this period, [] were presented to people in grades GS-15 and below. In short, it seems to me, there is a distinct correlation between seniority and age and the awarding of the Agency's and the Community's more prestigious honors. I believe this is wrong. For example, I would wager that the author or authors of the seminal CIA study on Soviet oil production two years ago did not receive either the Medal of Merit or the DIM. The impact of this study and its proven accuracy in the face of much controversy in my view certainly would have warranted consideration of its authors for at least the Medal of Merit. People such as these deserve recognition as well as, and sometimes instead of, people ending careers more notable for their success in getting promoted and surviving than for making lasting contributions to the Agency, the Community, and the country. []

3. I am aware that Frank has been working on the honors and medals problem. Nevertheless, I believe that one of the problems basic to this situation is the philosophy behind the awarding of the medals, especially the more prestigious ones. Have you since your arrival at the Agency met with the Honor and Merit Awards Board to convey to them personally your philosophy of who should receive such medals and honors? If not, such a face to face encounter might be useful. []

4. As you think about such a meeting, I would reiterate my basic point: I am not quarreling with the number of awards given nor the level of the medals presented. I am bothered by the percentage of DIMs and IMMs given to senior people late in their careers or at the end of their careers and what I perceive to be the slighting of extraordinary achievements by non-managerial analysts, researchers, engineers, and others so often responsible for the major breakthroughs and contributions to intelligence. []

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